

# Castle to Castle

## Cardiff to Caernarfon



### 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bike Ride

#### 3<sup>rd</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> August 2019

#### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August: Cardiff Bay to Pontsticill

We meet at 9.30 am by the water's edge in Cardiff Bay, Europe's largest waterfront development, and set off towards the city centre. Passing beside the Millennium Stadium we take a few minutes to divert inside the spectacular outer walls of Cardiff Castle to see its wonderful medieval keep and gothic towers before starting on our journey in earnest. Saying goodbye to Cardiff we now cycle beside the River Taff through delightful parks and woodlands to Tongwynlais where a short sharp uphill section brings us to fairy tale inspired Castell Coch.....the Red Castle.



After a brief stop we resume our ride along the traffic free Taff Trail heading northwards through one of the most historic and industrialized areas of South Wales to the town that was once its iron capital: Merthyr Tydfil. Leaving Merthyr our route takes on a decidedly more rural feel as the Taff Trail follows the steady incline of the old Merthyr to Brecon Railway. Climbing gradually through woodland we arrive at Pontsticill where we will spend the night.

Accommodation: Butchers Arms Bunk House

Distance: 35miles

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#### Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August: Pontsticill to Bronllys

Today we enjoy one of the most scenic sections of Lôn Las Cymru as we cycle through the heart of the Brecon Beacons. Departing Pontsticill our route climbs through forests bordering the Pontsticill and Pentwyn Reservoirs to reach the pass of Torpantau, the highpoint of the day at 439metres.





After stopping to enjoy the views and a well earned rest we can now relax somewhat as the route descends for a leisurely 13 miles past the Talybont reservoir, the pretty village of Llanfrynach and beside the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal before delivering us right into the heart of Brecon. Here we can enjoy afternoon tea at Castle Hotel and explore the narrow

streets and passageways of this cathedral town. Resuming our ride we progress along undulating country lanes to the village of Llanfili from where we descend to Bronllys. There is no mistaking our arrival, the landmark of Bronllys Castle stands like a sentry beside the road. Nearby is the Riverside Campsite.

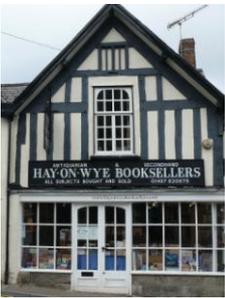


Accommodation: Riverside International Camping .

Distance 27 miles.

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### **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August: Bronllys to Builth Wells**



The day begins with an easy ride along the elevated road which skirts the northern escarpment of the Black Mountains. Before long we arrive in the bibliophile mecca of Hay-on-Wye. After taking a breather and time out to explore this fascinating town we continue on to Glasbury a pretty village on the banks of the River Wye to commence our two day relationship with the river. The start is delightful as we spin along the quiet lanes and through pleasant woodland to the renovated Erwood Station where we find a

collection of steam engines, railway memorabilia, craft centre and small cafe. From Erwood the river leads us on towards the market town of Builth Wells. Once a popular destination for Victorian tourists who came to *take the waters* our campsite is appropriately located beside the river. A short walk across the famous 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge brings us to the town centre.



Accommodation: White House Campsite

Distance: 29 miles

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### **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> August: Builth Wells to Llanidloes**

Today we cycle along the narrow and undulating lanes which follow the River Wye towards Llanidloes. Our route is a bit like a rollercoaster as we climb onto high moorland slopes before diving back into the pleasant woodlands and riverside meadows of the valley below. By the time we reach the market town of Rhayader, the oldest town in Mid Wales, we are ready for a well



earned rest. Rhayader is in fact an important landmark in our journey through Wales, three and a

half days into our seven day trip, we are now halfway in terms of miles! From Rhayader we continue to follow the ever diminishing River Wye to Llangurig where now, barely more than a mountain stream, we bid it goodbye.

Today's ride finishes just beyond the picturesque market town of Llanidloes. Tonight our accommodation is the Plasnewydd Bunkhouse. Situated a short distance from town the bunkhouse affords fabulous views of the mid Wales countryside.



Accommodation: Plasnewydd Bunkhouse

Distance: 34miles

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### **Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August: Llanidloes to Corris**



Having left the River Wye behind we start the fourth day beside the fledgling River Severn as it descends from its source through the remote Hafren Forest. Our target is the top of the mountain road which traverses the moorland between Llanidloes and Machynlleth. Height gain is steady and before long we leave the river and forest behind to emerge onto the open moorland. The Dylife Gorge is passed on our way to the summit. At 509m the summit can be eerily desolate but we have the satisfaction of knowing we have reached the high point of the week where we can rest and enjoy a magnificent view towards Snowdon, one the broadcaster Wynford



Vaughan Thomas believed to be the best in Wales! Our exertions are rewarded with a glorious 8 mile descent into the historic town of Machynlleth from where only a few miles remain to our destination. The wooded valley of the River Dulas provides an enjoyable end to the day.

Accommodation: Corris Hostel

Distance: 29 miles

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### **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> August: Corris to Harlech**

From Corris we continue along the steep sided wooded valley of the River Dulas. The rise is unremitting but as we pop out of the valley we are able to catch sight of the slopes and upper crags of Cadair Idris and the beautiful Mawddach Estuary. Shortly afterwards we reach our highpoint and the fun begins with an exhilarating descent which has us whooshing around the flanks of Cadair down into Dolgellau. Between Dolgellau and Barmouth the cycling is a dream with the route taking the course of the traffic free former railway that hugs the edge of the



estuary. Woodland and saltmarsh, mountains and coastline unite to create a scene described by William Wordsworth as sublime. All too soon it's over and we reach the historic Barmouth Bridge



on which we cross the estuary into the lovely little seaside town of Barmouth. The final stage of today's ride, squeezed between the hills of Snowdonia and Cardigan Bay obliges us to cycle on the main road, however, progress is easy and great views of Snowdonia and Harlech Castle, one of the outstanding sights of Wales, make for an enjoyable cycle. The day ends with a steep

ascent to our campsite at Merthyr Farm. A sting in the tail but one that is rewarded with fantastic views across the estuary to Snowdon.

Accommodation: Merthyr Farm Camping

Distance: 33miles



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## Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August: Harlech to Caernarfon.



From Merthyr Farm we continue to follow the mountain road around the foothills of the Rhinog Mountains. Within a couple of miles our high point is gained and we descend to the mudflats of the Afon Dwryrd and the historic port of Porthmadog which we approach across the famous Cob (Harbour Wall). Porthmadog was built as a trading port

200yrs ago to serve the slate mines of Blaenau Ffestiniog and is our last major town before reaching Caernarfon. There is now only 21 miles to go, of which 15 are traffic free. A lovely final section that has us whizzing along the former Caernarfon to Afonwen railway line right into Caernarfon town centre. Our journey ends as it began with a harbour and a castle. Caernarfon Castle does not disappoint. Invested with World Heritage status it stands guard to the entrance of the Menai Straights and provides a wonderful location for us to finish. After 225miles and a cumulative ascent of 5000m it's time to celebrate!!!

Accommodation: Premier Inn

Distance: 30 miles

